

April 2001

ATG Interviews Angela Adair-Hoy, e-Book Publisher and Author

Ron Chepesiuk

Winthrop University, Rchepesiuk@compuserve.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Chepesiuk, Ron (2001) "ATG Interviews Angela Adair-Hoy, e-Book Publisher and Author," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 13: Iss. 2, Article 18.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3458>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

MILLENNIUM

Minutes *continued*

publishers. Finally, at 9:00 p.m., semi-stoned from the fumes of the "ink," and staggering with fatigue, you stapled the various copies together and headed home.

There you relayed the day's events and it made for brief and disappointing conversation. You could not claim "I put out a fire and rescued a small child," or "I invented a new programming language." All you could say, most days, was "I ran the **Ditto machine**." (For the benefit of any readers who happen to be my current, and last, wife Janet, I want to have it on record that the **Ditto machine** is the greatest invention since the credit card, because, in a way, it brought us together.)

When you got to work the next morning, you were greeted by the extremely Dutch owner of the company, who, in a voice filled with pained self-pity, pointed out on more than one occasion that each ruined sheaf of analyslips cost him a nickel. And in those days a nickel was worth real money: namely, five cents.

The real miracle in all of this was not that I quit and went into something less mentally stressful such as landmine removal, or that I did not burn the place down, or in the modern style, come to work one day toting a loaded assault rifle. The real miracle is not even that I stayed in the business, albeit with another company, **Faxon**, which used a computer to print its invoices and orders. The real miracle is that any of the clients got any of their journal issues, any time, ever, even one.

There are many reasons to not like computers. But, whenever I get the Blue Screen of Death on my laptop or one of my desktop machines starts printing gibberish, I have only to think back to the **Ditto machine** to get everything back in perspective. Final note: "**Ditto**" was a company name as well as a product name. I did several searches and could not find a trace of them. If **Ditto Corporation** still exists, and has a legal staff, none of the above is meant to disparage their fine products. If not

ATG Interviews Angela Adair-Hoy

e-Book Publisher and Author

by **Ron Chepesiuk** (Winthrop University, 782 Wofford Street, Rock Hill, SC 29730) <RChepesiuk@compuserve.com>

*As a pioneer in the emerging e-publishing industry, Angela Adair-Hoy is one of the most prolific and successful self published authors on the Internet today. She's been in e-publishing since June of 1997 and was one of the first writers to offer her e-books for sale. This past December St. Martin's Press published her co-authored book, **How To Publish and Promote Online**, which was one of the best-selling e-books ever. Adair-Hoy is the publisher of the **Writer's Market Report**, which now has 45,000 subscribers, and the co-owner, with her husband, of **BookLocker.com**, one of Internet's largest and most successful e-publishing companies.*

Contributing editor Ron Chepesiuk caught up with the busy author-publisher-entrepreneur in Greenville, SC at one of her recent speaking engagements and got her thoughts on the e-book trend and its impact on libraries.

ATG: What has been your experience with libraries?

AA: I've always loved libraries. In fact, I could live in one. We recently moved to the Bangor (Maine) area, and I remember going to the **Bangor Public Library** for the first time. It's highly subsidized by **Stephen King** and it shows. The building is huge and so architecturally daring and the inside is absolutely astounding. The library has books that you can only find in some of the bigger university libraries. Recently, I began to sell e-books to libraries.

ATG: What's involved?

AA: I'm used to getting purchase orders electronically from bookstores, but one day, a library sent **BookLocker.com** a purchase order through the mail. It was for a CD-ROM. I couldn't believe it. Then I thought about it. Wow! There is a whole new market out there that I haven't thought of. I had always associated libraries with feely, touch, and nice smelling books. I didn't associate them with digital files.

ATG: Have you got a lot of purchase orders from libraries since then?

AA: Oh, yes. Lots of them, mainly from public libraries. I should note one interesting thing about the library orders. Every one we've received so far has come by postal mail. That's interesting when you consider how much time and money libraries can

save if they send their orders electronically. I would be happy to bill them. But every order so far has been for the traditional book or for the CD-ROM. We haven't had a library order for a downloadable e-book yet.

ATG: How do you explain that?

AA: I think it's because libraries still aren't in tune with the e-book trend. Librarians want to handle books that are traditional form, which is like most everybody else at this point. But I think that's going to change.

ATG: You are the owner of BookLocker.com. How did that come about?

AA: I was approached by the original owner of **BookLocker.com** in 1999 to list and sell my "How to Write" e-books on his Website. He offered me 70 percent royalties and non exclusive rights. The contract was simple and the least greedy one I've seen in e-publishing. I said, "Let's do it." Within a week, my books were his best selling books. Then the owner offered to sell me **BookLocker.com** at a very reasonable price and I bought it. It had grown so fast that the owner felt he couldn't handle it. Today, we have 800 e-books for sale at the **BookLocker.com** Website, no small figure when you consider we reject 70 percent of all the proposals we receive.

ATG: What's involved in the submission process?

AA: I look at every submission before making a decision. The author has to submit the book in text or MS-Word so that my system can pick up the typos, misspellings and grammatical errors.

ATG: How do you see the e-book playing out? Do you see it making a major impact on libraries?

AA: I see the e-book playing a big role. First, there is the question of shelf space. I don't know of a library that isn't hurting for shelf space. You can put ten e-books in the space now occupied by one print book. You can't put a print book into a computer, but you can put thousands of e-books into a computer. You can give a person a CD-ROM or hand held reader or let them download every book by one author. Books will no longer be out of print anymore, and you'll always be able to find the book you're looking for. In fact, fifty years from now, you'll be able to find an electronic copy of any book you want.

continued on page 50

ATG: *You know there are e-book enthusiasts who share your vision but are convinced that e-books will put libraries, as well as print publishers, out of business.*

AA: I don't share that point of view. Libraries will always be a free channel for the distribution of books. You will never be able to force the public to buy information so long as libraries can provide it for free. A lot of people can't afford to download files. A lot of people—and it's going to be like this for a long time—can't afford to buy computers. People will always need libraries. Democratic societies will always need libraries. I used to go to the bookstore and buy two or three books a week, until I realized the dent it was making on my pocket book. So I started to go to the public library and get them for free. That's what the library is there for.

ATG: *Will the librarian's job be tougher because of the advent of the e-book? For example, the e-book makes it possible for anybody to get published today. Many e-book publishers are really nothing more than subsidy publishers. I can see that making collection development tougher for librarians.*

AA: It's true that there are a lot of low quality e-book publishers in cyberspace today, but we have reputable electronic publishers that are trying to bring standards to e-publishing. For example, every major brick and mortar publisher now sells e-books. Librarians will just have to apply the high standards they use in selecting print books. Besides, a lot of print publishers publish bad books. I still read print books and I can attest to that. Take romance books. You wonder how many of their authors got a book contract in the first place.

ATG: *There are a lot of people—including librarians—who don't like to read e-books. One criticism you hear is that most readers don't like to turn pages and won't really accept having to push a button to read a book.*

AA: A new format for the e-book is coming out and it's actually paper. I believe it's being put out by Xerox. So I don't think the issue of turning pages is going to impact significantly on the e-book's future.

ATG: *Other critics of e-books say their format is limited. For instance, you can't read them in the bathtub or at the beach. What about you? Do you read books in the bathtub or at the beach?*

AA: I don't mind reading books on a laptop. But I don't have a hand held reader,

primarily because I want to make a statement. I've been offered a hand held reader for free, but I turned it down.

ATG: *Why was that?*

AA: It was a **Rocket** e-book hand held and it was just too expensive.

ATG: *I believe it costs about \$200.*

AA: That's right. I'll buy an e-book reader when the public can afford one, and if a person drops it in the bathtub, he will be able to afford to buy a replacement. When that inexpensive e-book reader arrives, it will be the industry leader and will give the e-book publishing industry the push it needs. It will be a good thing for libraries because they won't have to buy e-book readers. People will bring their readers to the library and have them loaded.

ATG: *How far are we from that happening?*

AA: I'm not sure, but I've certainly made my intentions known. I've given hints to three or four top e-publishing industry leaders and told them that when they make an affordable e-book reader, I will go with them and take my readers with me. My e-publications have 45,000 readers, and I can promote their product. To pay \$200 for a reader is ridiculous because it's not a complex piece of hardware.

ATG: *So you're saying it's over priced?*

AA: Yes, I am. I sent an e-mail to **Nuevo Media** and to the company saying what was wrong with their marketing strategy and why they weren't making money.

ATG: *Now that you have become aware of the library market, are you going to devise any particular marketing strategy?*

AA: I think we will have to set up a spot on the back end of our Website where libraries can come to use and access the e-book that they want without having to pick up a phone or fax us a purchase order. We will have to set our library customers up with a password, much like we do with our regular customers, except that libraries will be able to access our inventory at any time they want. But as for having a marketing strategy focusing specifically on libraries, I don't think we will do anything different than we are doing now.

ATG: *How far is BookLocker.com from that happening?*

AA: In less than an year, our entire Website will be database driven. We are currently retooling the site to make sure it operates more efficiently.


ATG: *How about security? Is hacking a problem for you?*

AA: Somebody tries to hack into our site at least once a month. It takes us about five minutes to figure out who the person is and where he is hacking from. A lot of those crooks use stolen credit card numbers, not realizing they can be traced (snaps her fingers) just like that. As soon as a person arrives at our Website, we know where they are coming from. Last week, one of our books was downloaded 20 times. We log the addresses of the downloads, so it was easy to figure out that the 20 orders came from 20 different computers. One person had given his password to 20 of his buddies. I sent him an e-mail, thanking him for referring all of his friends to buy the books and informing him that we were charging his credit card for 20 downloads.

ATG: *What was his response?*

AA: No response. The crooks won't e-mail us because they know it's easier to trace somebody by e-mail than it is by credit card. In any case, we always turn them into the credit card company.

ATG: *Looking at the future of the e-book, not everybody is sold on the idea that it has a bright future. In a recent report, Anderson Consulting Company projected that only 10 percent of the books sold by 2005 will be e-books. That's not a high percentage.*

AA: I disagree with those statistics. A lot of the so-called experts don't really have a handle on the e-publishing industry. I think that by 2005 consumers will find any book they want in an e-book format. I made a prediction two years ago that certain school districts would be issuing hand held readers to their students with all their courses loaded on them. One California school district is already doing that. Meanwhile, publishers — **Random House** and **Simon and Shuster**, for example— are already converting their inventories to e-books. Right now, you can get any book in the public domain you want as an e-book, thanks to **Project Gutenberg**. It's going to be easier and cheaper for libraries to download books from an e-publishing Website than to buy more print copies of them. So the future of e-books is very bright. I have no doubt about that. 

*Ron Chepesiuk is the author of 15 books and more than 2100 articles that have appeared in such publications such as the **New York Times**, **National Review**, **Modern Maturity**, **USA Today**. He is a contributing editor to **American Libraries** and the 1999 recipient of the **Humphrey-OCLC-Forest Press Award** for "significant contribution to international librarianship."*